

This is a story I want you to know. There are things in life that you prepare for, and there are things that just hit you like a brick. For some reason either no one wants you to feel anything, or they want you to feel everything. The secret that I had been hiding, was revealed to everyone. My life was beautiful, but two hours changed all of that. I don't remember the girl I was before I got raped, and I think that is what has been hardest for me. I want that girl back. I want to be happy. They raped me. It was a big emotional trauma, and I didn't feel like dealing with it at first. They took everything from me. They told me I had no other choice but to do what they said. They made me feel like nothing. They took the only innocence I had left. They took a video of me being raped, and sent it to my entire school. When I was confronted about the video by my school's principal, I told him I had no idea it was taken, and that I did not consent. They told me it was my word against theirs. They expelled me from that school. They deleted the videos off of their phones. They never reported the incident. My smile became my weapon. I told everyone that I was 'ok'. I made it seem like I was the one at fault. I started to believe that I deserved all those things that happened to me. The people I would have never expected to put me down, taunted me with what happened. The hoops I had to jump through to make people believe me were incredible. Three years later, and I am still dealing with hatred from others. How I am telling you all this stuff without crying, I ran out of tears. I had so many dreams and goals, but my life became focusing on fixing what was broken inside of me. I became dependent on other people for my happiness. I started self-medicating to numb all of my feelings. Nothing affected me. I had horrible things said to me and done to me, and I had no feelings left about anything. I did not know how to be happy. I used to be the type of person that saw the good in everybody, and gave everyone the benefit of the doubt. Now, I don't let people in because I am so afraid that I will be hurt again. Everybody has their own choice in coming forward with their identity and telling their story. What happened to me is not my fault, and this is how I am showing it. I feel like it was almost be a lie to not share my story because it is such a big part of my life now. I

have nothing to hide. I just want the justice system to put the needs of sexual assault victims first. It took me a long time to realize one of life's greatest lessons. Things are going to happen in life, and the only person that can get you through that is yourself. I can't sit here today and honestly tell you that I have "recovered" from what has happened to me. The video being sent to me about a year ago really threw me for a loop. I had to relive all of those emotions and memories I had. I had to turn my lemons into lemonade. I am not going to sit back anymore and just watch what happens to me. I am going to say something. I am tired of people not thinking sexual assault is an issue. Just because you didn't go through it and you don't know the actual impact it can have on somebody, you still need to respect it as an issue. If someone is putting you in a situation that you are uncomfortable with, no means no and that is all you should have to say. You should not have to fight or scream, no means no. I started to believe that my no meant nothing at all, but I want you to know that it means everything.